

Notes for teachers
Unit P – Mark's Gospel

GCSE Religious Studies

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Teacher's Guide to Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies

Unit P Mark's Gospel

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Introduction

Candidates are required to demonstrate **knowledge and understanding** of Mark's gospel. They should therefore know the text and understand the key ideas. The parts of each section that they need to know are highlighted in bold. Understanding implies more than knowledge, though there is no understanding without relevant knowledge. Candidates should be able to explain the reasons for, or the significance of, a particular teaching or action. They also need to be able to explain what Christians and others may learn from or do in response to the teachings and example of Jesus.

Candidates are also tested on their skills of **evaluation**. The specification gives the advice that candidates need to be aware of non-religious as well as religious views on the issues raised by studying Mark's Gospel. Evaluation questions are always a controversial statement followed by the words:

'Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer, showing you have considered another point of view.'

Candidates are free to agree or disagree with the statement, but they must give reasons from Mark's Gospel for either their point of view or the alternative. This means that teaching must involve discussion of the controversial issues raised in the Gospel and guidance about differing points of view.

Introducing students to Mark's Gospel

Candidates will need to be introduced to the Gospel, even though this is not specified in the specification. It is a good idea to begin by reading an introductory chapter on the background to the Gospel from a book such as *Mark's Gospel* by R Cooper (Hodder). You should use this to make sure that your students know the meaning of:

- Pharisee
- teacher of the law (scribe)
- Sadducee
- chief priest
- temple
- synagogue.

They should also be made aware of the nature of the Roman occupation and the relationship of the Jews to the Romans. It is also a good idea to give them a map of the area so that they can see where events took place when they study the Gospel.

The first teaching on the Gospel could take the form of a brainstorm on what a gospel is. This could be based on Mark 1:1 and should lead to an awareness that the Gospel is likely to be a presentation of what Mark saw as the key elements of his life which show Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

This should be followed by a general overview of the contents of the Gospel so the topics studied in the specification can be placed into context.

Section P1 - Discipleship

Candidates need to understand that teachers (later in Judaism known as Rabbis), including the scribes and the Pharisees, had schools of disciples. Disciples were those who received instruction from and accepted the teaching of their teacher or master.

1. The Nature of Discipleship

Candidates need to know **the call of the first disciples** (1:14-20) and how this shows that disciples must:

- be prepared to answer immediately to the call to discipleship
- be ready to give up their worldly interests such as jobs if required so to do.

They also need to know the story of **the call of Levi** (2:13-17) and how this shows that anyone can be called to be a disciple, and that disciples must:

- respond immediately to the call
- spread the word (Levi invited fellow tax collectors to a meal with Jesus).

They need to know the story of **the appointing of the Twelve Apostles** (3:13-19) and how this shows that disciples should:

- be with Jesus
- preach
- try to help people with problems (drive out demons).

They need to know the story of **the sending out of the Twelve** (6:7-13) and how this shows that disciples should:

- not worry about food, clothes or money
- rely on those who receive them
- preach repentance
- heal the sick.

Candidates should discuss what the nature of discipleship as shown in Mark might mean for Christians today and whether it would be easy or hard to be this type of disciple. They should also be aware that in appointing twelve apostles Jesus, with recollection of the twelve tribes of Israel, may have been calling into being a new, obedient community of God.

2. The Cost of Discipleship

Mark's Gospel shows that being a disciple has costs.

Candidates need to know the story of **Jesus being visited by his family** (3:31-35) and how this shows that becoming a disciple may mean giving up family and friends, but that being a disciple gives a new family of the followers of Jesus. They need to discuss whether religious commitment can, or should, over-ride family commitment.

They should also know **Jesus' teaching on suffering as discipleship** (8:31-38) and how this shows that disciples have to be prepared to suffer and even to give up their

lives to stand up for Jesus and his words. They should discuss whether being a disciple today also means suffering and being prepared to die. It may be a good idea to look at the example of some modern Christians.

Candidates need to know **Jesus' teaching on true greatness** (9:33-37) and how this shows the cost of discipleship as having to become like a child in relationship to God, and being prepared to be last in the eyes of the world in order to be first in the eyes of God. The issues surrounding this controversial teaching should be discussed and also whether all disciples need to be servants of all.

They also need to know the story of **the rich young man** (10:17-31) and how this shows that the cost of discipleship is to:

- keep the commandments
- be prepared to give up everything – riches, home, family, possessions – for the sake of Jesus and the gospel.

However, the rewards of discipleship make this worthwhile as they will receive a hundred times as much and eternal life. They need to discuss the arguments for and against such a view of discipleship and eternal life. They also need to discuss the meaning of the phrase, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

Candidates need to know the story of **James and John and the kingdom** (10:35-40), and how this reinforces the teaching of Jesus that disciples need to be prepared to suffer and give their lives for others just as Jesus did.

They need to discuss the whole issue of the cost of discipleship in terms of what it means for Christians today and why there might be arguments about it.

3. The Problems of Discipleship

In Mark's Gospel the problems caused by the nature and cost of discipleship are clearly shown in the problems the original disciples had.

Candidates need to know the story of **the spirit cast out of the boy** (9:14-29) and how this shows that the disciples could not cast out the spirit because they had not yet understood the true meaning of prayer, neither had they understood the meaning of self-sacrifice for disciples as they still did not understand the meaning of Jesus' predictions of his passion.

They need to know **the teaching of Jesus on service** (10:41-45) and how being required to be the servant of all, and give up one's life for others, caused problems for the first disciples and may cause problems for disciples today.

Candidates need to know **the story of the widow's mite** (12:41-44) and how this shows the problem for disciples in having to reject the conventional views of society. Conventional society saw those giving lots of money to the temple as the best people, but Jesus showed his disciples that the true understanding is the percentage of wealth given. They should discuss the arguments for and against this view and whether it was right for the widow to give so much of her money to the temple.

They need to know **the failure of the disciples in Gethsemane** (14:27-42) noting that the text includes Jesus' prediction that the disciples would fall away and leave Jesus to die and that Peter would deny Jesus. They should discuss how, for the first disciples, the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. Consequently they could not stay awake and keep watch whilst Jesus prepared himself for his death.

Candidates should know **the story of Peter's denial** (14:66-72) and how this shows that despite his promise at the Last Supper, Peter could not face the cost of discipleship when faced with the reality. They should discuss how this might help Christians today.

This section should include discussion about how the disciples changed after the resurrection and how Peter became the leader of the Church and died for his master. They should also discuss how the failures and success of the first disciples might help Christians today.

Section P2 - Conflict and Argument

In order to understand this section, candidates need to know the nature of authority in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Although Palestine was a part of the Roman Empire, Galilee was administered by a son of Herod the Great, Herod Antipas. Those who supported his rule were known as Herodians. The authority of Judaism in Galilee was represented by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (many of whom were Pharisees). The events of Mark chapters 1-9 took place in Galilee. Judea was administered directly by Rome through the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate. The authority of Judaism was the Sanhedrin, a council of 71 leaders who were Sadducees and teachers of the law. In both areas there was conflict between the Roman authority and the Jewish authority. Teachers should refer back to the introduction when beginning this section.

The crucial words are **how and why** which candidates must study and discuss for each specified text.

1. How and why Jesus came into conflict with authority in Galilee

Candidates need to know **the story of the paralysed man** (2:1-12) and how this led to conflict because teachers of the law were present and Jesus did not just heal the man, he healed him by claiming to forgive his sins. This caused conflict because the teachers of the law thought that, by claiming to be able to forgive sins, Jesus was committing blasphemy and claiming power for himself (the right to forgive sins) which belonged to God alone.

They also need to know about **Jesus eating with sinners** (2:13-17) where some teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. This caused conflict because the Pharisees taught that eating with unclean people like tax collectors and sinners could make a Jew unclean and therefore unable to pray to God etc. The reply of Jesus about the sick needing a doctor would have caused argument because it justified going against the traditional Jewish teaching on uncleanness.

Candidates need to know **the challenge about fasting** (2:18-22) and how the fact that Jesus was not fasting when the Pharisees and disciples of John the Baptist were fasting caused conflict and argument. Jews were supposed to fast at certain times to follow the law and come closer to God. Jesus' reply about not fasting while the bridegroom is present, and his teaching about new wine in new bottles and new patches on new garments, would have been seen as a claim by Jesus that he had greater authority than either the Pharisees or John the Baptist. This was bound to cause conflict.

Candidates need to know **the story of the disciples** in the cornfields (2:23-28) and how this caused conflict because Jesus allowed his disciples to break the Sabbath law. Candidates should know the Sabbath law about working and understand that by referring to King David allowing his followers to break the Temple Law, Jesus was bound to create conflict because he was claiming to be on a par with David. This was then increased when he claimed that the Sabbath was 'made for man, not man for the Sabbath'. This was an argument within Judaism at the time as to whether the demands

of the law should take account of human need and Jesus was siding with a minority view among the teachers of the law. Candidates should discuss the Sabbath law and its relevance to life today. They should also know the connection between the Sabbath and Sunday.

They should also know **the story of the man with a shrivelled hand** (3:1-6) and how Jesus took the argument a stage further by claiming that Sabbath law is secondary to the command to do good and to save life. The crucial point in 3:6 is that these conflicts brought the Pharisees and Herodians together to plot the death of Jesus. Candidates should discuss the possible reasons for these two groups, who did not like each other, joining forces to plot the death of Jesus.

Candidates should know **the arguments about ritual cleanness** (7:1-8, 14-23) and how some Pharisees and teachers of the law came from Jerusalem to talk to Jesus and were shocked to see his disciples eating without washing their hands in the manner of the Jewish law. Jesus' reply, quoting the prophet Isaiah to say they were only paying lip service to following God, and then his statement to a crowd of people that nothing coming from the outside to the inside can make someone unclean, was bound to cause conflict. It would mean that all the Jewish food laws (keeping kashrut) were unnecessary. Mark clearly saw this and points it out in an aside. Candidates should be aware that Jesus had to explain the meaning of this to his disciples and should perhaps be aware of the arguments and conflict between Orthodox and Reform Jews today over the kashrut laws.

They should also know **the teaching on Corban** (7:9-13) and how this would cause conflict because Jesus was pointing out how the Pharisees and teachers of the law broke the law themselves by allowing people to break the law on honouring parents by making their money a gift to God.

Whilst teaching this part of the section, teachers should ensure that candidates realise that Jesus was a Jew who kept the majority of the laws (he went to synagogue every Sabbath), it is the few he goes against which cause the conflict.

2. How and why - Passion predictions, entry into Jerusalem, cleansing the Temple

Candidates need to know **the three predictions of the Passion** (8:31-33, 9:30-32, 10:32-34) and discuss why Jesus predicted his suffering, death and resurrection. This might be a good time to look at the title of Messiah, and how the predictions of his Passion might have been concerned with ensuring that the disciples had his understanding of the title rather than the conventional one.

Candidates need to know **the story of the entry into Jerusalem** (11:1-11) and how this showed Jesus as the Messiah fulfilling Old Testament prophecy. They should also be aware of how such a public display was likely to upset both the Roman and Jewish authorities.

They also need to know **the story of the cleansing of the Temple** (11:15-17) and why Jesus did this. The apparent reason in Mark is that by using the Court of the Gentiles as the area for buying sacrifices and changing Roman money into Temple

money, Gentiles were being prevented from worshipping God - 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.' However, more likely is that this was seen as fulfilment of Malachi 3:1, Zechariah 14:21 and Hosea 9:15, which referred to God's final intervention in history and Jesus' action was seen as that of the Messiah on his final visit to his Father's house and people. Candidates should discuss how this would have led to conflict with the Jewish and Roman authorities.

3. How and why arguments led to betrayal

Although there are specified texts here, candidates should be told also to use the information in the rest of this section when answering questions on betrayal and arrest.

Candidates need to know **the argument about authority** (11:27-33) and how the chief priests, teachers of the law and elders (members of the Sanhedrin) questioned the authority by which he had driven the moneychangers and animal sellers out of the Temple. They need to discuss how Jesus' answer faced his questioners with a catch-22 situation and how it would have led them to be angry with Jesus.

They also need to know **the question on Caesar and taxes** (12:13-17) and why paying taxes to Caesar was such an issue with certain Jews. They also need to discuss how Jesus' answer could have caused him to upset both the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities.

Candidates need to know **the argument with the Sadducees about resurrection** (12:18-27) and how Jesus' answer was siding with the Pharisees' viewpoint, so angering the Sadducees who were part of the Sanhedrin.

They should also know **the question on the greatest commandment** (12:28-34) and how it shows Jesus the Jew and his understanding of the law. They should also understand the significance of the last verse - 'And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions' - in terms such as the Jewish authorities would be worried about a Messiah figure who was so expert in the law.

Candidates should know **the plot to kill Jesus** (14:1-11) and how the chief priests and teachers of the law were trying to find a way of getting rid of Jesus without annoying the people. They should also be aware of the possibility that Jesus' treatment of the woman in the house of Simon the Leper was not what would have been expected of a Messiah figure and may have caused Judas to go to the chief priests and offer to betray Jesus. Candidates should also discuss different reasons that have been offered to explain Judas' behaviour.

Section P3 - Death and Resurrection

1. The meaning and significance of the events leading up to the trial of Jesus

Candidates will need to know **the Last Supper** (14:22-31) and its meaning in terms of bread and wine and the Passover, the blood of the covenant, the prophecy of betrayal and the prophecy of life after death. They will also need to know the significance of the Last Supper in terms of the Eucharist in the various churches. They should also discuss different views about the Last Supper and its importance.

They will also need to know the **Prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane** (14:32-42). They should study the meaning of the prayers in terms of Jesus and his mission, and his relationship with his Father. They should also understand the significance of the prayers in terms of the humanity and divinity of Jesus.

Candidates will need to know **the Betrayal and Arrest** (14:43-52). They should understand the possible meanings of betraying with a kiss and betrayal by a disciple (eg why Judas was regarded as a saint by some Churches). They should understand the significance of the arrest by a crowd sent from the Sanhedrin (chief priests, teachers of the law and elders) and whether this would have been possible without the permission of the Romans.

2. The death of Jesus

Candidates will need to know **the trial before the High Priest** (14:53-65) especially:

- the lack of evidence
- false testimonies not agreeing, including the destruction of the Temple in three days
- the silence of Jesus
- the question of the High Priest
- Jesus' agreement that he was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One
- the condemnation for blasphemy.

They should discuss the rationality of a Jewish high priest condemning the Messiah for being the Messiah.

They will also need to know **the trial before Pontius Pilate** (15:1-15) and understand that the charge has become being the King of the Jews, which would have been a challenge to the Roman authority. They should be aware that Barabbas means 'son of the father' and was possibly a Messiah figure who had fought against the Romans. Jesus was condemned to death on the charge of claiming to be the King of the Jews by the Roman authority, but Mark makes it appear that all the blame should be given to the Jewish leaders. Many scholars think that there were no Christian witnesses to the trial and that Mark presented it in this way to show that Christianity was not a threat to the Romans.

Candidates will need to know **the story of the crown of thorns** (15:16-20) and how this shows that the Roman soldiers thought of Jesus as a political opponent who claimed to be the King of the Jews.

They will also need to know what happened at **the crucifixion** (15:21-29). It is essential that they know only what Mark says as they will receive no credit for statements from the other Gospels. Mark says that:

- Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh but refused it
- The soldiers cast lots for his clothes
- ‘The King of the Jews’ was written above the cross, showing why he was being crucified
- He was crucified between two robbers
- Passers by, Jewish leaders and the two criminals insulted him and told him to save himself
- Everything went dark for three hours
- Jesus cried out about God forsaking him
- Jesus was offered a sponge filled with wine vinegar
- Jesus died
- The curtain of the Temple separating the Holy of Holies was torn in two
- The centurion in charge of the soldiers said ‘Truly this man was the Son of God’.

Candidates will need to understand **why Jesus had to die**. This should include the relationship between the death of Jesus and Christian teaching on atonement: the idea that in his death Jesus atoned for the sins of other people and opened the gate to salvation for everyone. They should discuss contrasting views on whether Jesus needed to die.

3. After death

Candidates should know **the story of the burial** (15:40-44) and the significance of the presence of the women disciples, and the fact that Joseph of Arimathea was a leading member of the Sanhedrin. This shows that many Jews (including some of their leaders and the Twelve) did not support the condemnation of Jesus.

They should also know **the story of the resurrection** (16:1-8) and understand why Mark chose to end his Gospel with the angel telling the women that Jesus had risen and would meet the disciples in Galilee, but they said nothing to anyone because they were afraid.

Candidates should be aware of the problems of the ending of Mark’s Gospel and the existence of the **Shorter and Longer Endings**. These, and **the meaning of the resurrection for Christians today** are very well covered at GCSE level in Robin Cooper’s *Mark’s Gospel*.

Section P4 - Who is Jesus?

Throughout this section, candidates should be encouraged to think about and discuss the nature of Jesus as shown in Mark – the key question being, ‘Was Jesus the Son of God?’

1. The nature of Jesus from events

Candidates should know **the story of the baptism of Jesus** (1:1-13) and understand how the words from heaven show Jesus as God’s son, and the identification of John the Baptist as Elijah shows Jesus as the Messiah.

Candidates should know **the story of the confession at Caesarea Philippi** (8:27-30), and should understand how this shows that the people of the area were asking questions about the identity of Jesus. Peter’s statement shows that the disciples already thought of Jesus as the Messiah, but the command of Jesus that Peter should tell no one possibly shows that Jesus wanted to keep his Messiahship secret until he had ensured that people had a correct understanding of what Messiah meant. This could be linked to the Messianic Secret in Mark, but this is no longer a specific part of the specification.

They should also know **the story of the transfiguration** (9:1-10) and how this shows the divine nature of Jesus, both in the transfiguring of his body and clothes and in the voice from heaven identifying Jesus as the Son of God. They should also understand the significance of Elijah and Moses showing Jesus as continuing or fulfilling the line of the Old Testament prophets and therefore of Judaism.

2. The nature of Jesus from miracles

Candidates should know **the story of the calming of the storm** (4:35-41) and understand how this nature miracle indicates Jesus as having control over nature which only God can have, hence the question of the disciples, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him.’

They should also know **the story of the healing of Legion** (5:1-20) and understand what this shows about the nature of Jesus. They should understand that this happened in a Gentile area (Decapolis) and is a combination of a healing and nature miracle as in healing Legion, Jesus showed power over nature by sending the spirits into the herd of pigs. They should discuss the problems raised by this miracle and look at suggested explanations such as the loud cry of Legion causing the pigs to bolt and the onlookers giving the explanation of Jesus sending the evil spirits.

Candidates should know **the story of the raising of Jairus’ daughter** (5:21-43). They can omit the story of the sick woman (5:25-34) and concentrate on raising the dead girl to life and how this shows the nature of Jesus as one who can give life. They should discuss alternative explanations to this story such as that she was not dead (‘The child is not dead, but asleep’).

They should also know **the story of the feeding of the five thousand** (6:39-44) and understand what this nature miracle says about the nature of Jesus.

Candidates should know **the story of the walking on the sea** (6:45-52) and what this nature miracle says about the nature of Jesus. They should discuss alternative explanations of the miracle and be aware of the way Mark links it with the feeding of the five thousand for an understanding of who Jesus is.

Candidates should know **the story of the healing of the deaf and mute man** (7:31-37) and how this healing miracle shows not only the nature of Jesus, but also the effects of the miracles on the people of the area. This could perhaps be used to link back to the plotting of the Pharisees and Herodians in Galilee.

Candidates should know **the story of Blind Bartimaeus** (10:46-52) and how this shows the nature of Jesus, particularly emphasising the hailing of Jesus as Son of David being a recognition of Jesus as Messiah by the general populace.

They should also know **the difference between nature and healing miracles**, in that nature miracles are much more linked to the power of God than healing miracles. They should understand that there were other miracle-workers at the time who performed healing miracles. Candidates also need to discuss the problems raised by miracles and whether it is possible to believe in miracles today. This could be linked to the issue of miracles in the Religion and Life module.

3. The nature of Jesus from the titles used in Mark

Candidates should know **the title Son of God** and understand its variety of meanings. For some Jews, it had become a Messianic title following on from references to Israel as God's son by prophets such as Hosea. For other Jews, it was a title used of any very holy Jew or Jewish miracle-worker. For the Greeks and Romans Son of God signified a divine nature, which is perhaps why this became the most popular title for Jesus when Christianity spread out of Palestine after the death of Jesus. They should understand the significance of the Roman Centurion using this title to describe Jesus at his crucifixion.

Candidates should know **the title Son of Man** and understand its significance in Mark's Gospel. This is the main title used by Jesus when speaking of himself. Some scholars think Jesus used this rather than Messiah or Son of God to avoid causing trouble with the authorities. Other scholars think Jesus used it as a specific Messianic title which reflected his understanding of his role as God's Messiah. The title appears in Daniel chapter 7 to refer to someone who represents God's saints who have suffered for their faith and who will bring in God's kingdom at the end of the world. The way Jesus uses the title in Mark shows that the Son of Man:

- has authority from God to forgive sins and overrule the Sabbath law
- must suffer and die at the hands of sinful men to free humans from the power of sin
- will rise from the dead and so give Christians the hope of eternal life
- will be seen in all his glory and power at the end of the world.

Candidates should know **the title Messiah (Christ)** and understand that Christ is the Greek word for the Hebrew 'Messiah' which means 'The Anointed One'. All the Kings of Israel were anointed by God's representative and, after the end of the Jewish kingdom, the idea began to develop that God would send a new anointed one, the Messiah, who would bring in God's kingdom. The Messiah would be a descendent of David who would have power over sin, evil spirits and nature, and would establish God's kingdom. Jesus is shown in Mark's gospel as having power over sin, evil spirits and nature and is recognised as the Messiah by evil spirits, the people he cured and by his disciples. However, Jesus re-interpreted Messiahship and when Peter recognised him as Messiah, Jesus immediately taught that he must suffer, be killed and rise three days later. So Jesus saw himself as the Messiah who must suffer, die and rise from the dead to bring salvation.

Candidates should be encouraged to discuss the titles of Jesus and what they meant for the people at the time of Jesus, for Christians today, and for non-religious people.

Candidates should also refer back to **the death and resurrection of Jesus** and discuss what these events reveal about the nature of Jesus. They should also look at their significance for Christians today, such as:

- Christians believe the resurrection proves that Jesus was not a human being because only God could rise from the dead.
- Christians believe the death of Jesus provides the opportunity and the motive for people to be saved from their sins. They believe that the death of Jesus was part of God's plan and the means by which the forgiveness of sins is achieved.
- Christians believe that sin separates humans from God and that the death of Jesus has saved people from the power of sin and their faith reconciles them to God. The death of Jesus removed the distance from God caused by sin, Christians describe this as reconciliation. They believe that the death and resurrection of Jesus reconcile people with God.

Candidates should be encouraged to discuss alternative views of all these issues.

Section P5 - Option 1 - The Parables of the Kingdom

1. Parables in Mark's Gospel

Candidates should know **the difference between a parable and an allegory**. A parable is a story from real life with one particular teaching or message, whereas an allegory is a story where the message is coded and everything in the story stands for something else. They should be able to relate this to the parables of Jesus.

Candidates should know **Mark's account of why Jesus used parables** (4:11-12) and understand modern interpretations of why Mark's account causes problems and may reflect a Roman misunderstanding of the nature of parables.

They should also know **other views of why Jesus used parables**, such as:

- they are easy to listen to and understand
- parables were an established method of teaching by Jewish rabbis
- as there was no printing and many people were illiterate, parables were a good way of getting your hearers to remember the message
- the hearers had to interpret the message for themselves, which may have given them greater meaning and importance.

They should be able to illustrate these ideas by reference to specific parables.

2. The Kingdom of God

Candidates need to know **beliefs about the Kingdom of God at the time of Jesus**, such as:

- God is the King of Israel (Psalms 5:2, 74:12, 93:1) and his kingdom is different from other kingdoms.
- God's kingdom has to be joined by faith in God and accepting his rule.
- God controls everything and sustains his creation so, in a sense, the kingdom of God was already in existence.
- God's kingdom will not come in full reality until the Messiah arrives to bring in God's kingdom and bring all the nations to accept the rule of God.
- Among the signs of God's kingdom would be the healing of diseases, the forgiveness of sins, the ending of the power of evil, and God showing his power over nature by removing all those things in nature which cause suffering.

They should relate this to the life and ministry of Jesus in Mark to judge how far Jesus brought in the Kingdom of God.

Candidates need to know **beliefs about the kingdom of God today**, such as:

- The Kingdom of God is a present reality because Jesus brought forgiveness of sins, healing of diseases and the arrival of the Messiah. By driving out evil spirits he showed that Satan's kingdom had ended and the kingdom of God had arrived.
- Many Christians today believe that God's Kingdom has come because the death and resurrection of Jesus has brought salvation and eternal life.

- However, many Christians also believe that God's Kingdom will not come in its fullness until the Son of Man comes in his glory; and some believe God's kingdom is heaven which they will not enter until death.

Candidates should be able to discuss the arguments for and against:

- God's Kingdom existing now (present reality)
- God's Kingdom not existing till the future (future reality)
- God's Kingdom being an irrational idea.

3. The Meaning of the Kingdom of God as seen in Parables

Candidates need to know **the parable of the sower** (4:1-9, 13-20) and what it shows about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Candidates need to know **the parable of the lamp** (4:21-25) and what it shows about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Candidates need to know **the parable of the seed growing secretly** (4:26-29) and what it shows about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Candidates need to know **the parable of the mustard seed** (4:30-32) and what it shows about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Candidates need to know **the parable of the tenants** (12:1-12) and what it shows about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Candidates need to know **the parable of the child as the model** (10:13-16) and what it shows about the meaning of the Kingdom of God.

Section P5 - Option 2 - Christians and Persecution

1. Reasons for believing Mark was written for non-Jews undergoing persecution

Candidates need to know about **Mark and Rome** in terms of the reasons for thinking that Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome for non-Jewish Christians in Rome. They should do this by studying the evidence of it being written for Christians undergoing persecution in 4:1-8; 4:17; 8:34-38; 9:49; 10:29-31; 10:35-40; 13:9-13; 14:37-39. Further information on the Gospel's Roman origin can be found in most commentaries on Mark.

Candidates need to know about **the persecution of Christians in Rome by Nero**, including the reasons for the persecution and the effects of the persecution. Information on this can be found in most histories of early Christianity. However, the following information may help.

Christians were not persecuted by the Romans as long as they were thought to be Jews. The Romans tolerated all religions in their empire as long as people showed their allegiance to Rome by making offerings to statues of the emperor. The Jews had a special dispensation not to do this because of their belief in one God only.

However, about 20 years after the death of Jesus, Jews and Christians began to quarrel with each other and sometimes got into trouble with the Romans because of this. Both Jews and Christians were expelled from Rome by the Emperor Claudius in 52 AD.

As they became more numerous, the Christians also became more suspect because they would not make offerings to the emperor, and they were suspected of being a secret society doing weird things (only baptised Christians were allowed to the Eucharist, and Christians were suspected of cannibalism because of rumours about eating body and blood). The Emperor Nero used this reputation to blame the fire of Rome (64 AD) on the Christians and began a persecution.

All this can be seen from the writings of the Romans:

Suetonius on the expulsion from Rome:

‘Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome.’

Suetonius on the Neronian persecution

‘Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a set of men adhering to a new and mischievous superstition.’

Tacitus on the Neronian persecution

‘But all the endeavours of men, all the emperor's largesse and the propitiation of the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire had been ordered. And so, to get rid of this rumour, Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are

commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Accordingly arrest was first made of those who confessed to being Christians, then, on their evidence, a great multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death, they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified; others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed.’

2. How Christians should behave under persecution

Candidates need to know **how Christians should behave under persecution** by studying 4:1-20, 8:34-38, 13:11-13 and working out what these teachings of Jesus say about how Christians should behave under persecution. They should also discuss the validity of these teachings and their relevance or otherwise to Christians today.

Candidates need to look at **the example of Jesus in undergoing persecution** (eg the arrest, the trials, the mocking by the soldiers, the crucifixion) and whether this is relevant to Christians today.

3. How a contemporary Christian has faced up to and dealt with persecution

Candidates should study **at least one contemporary Christian**, eg James Mawdsley, and assess why they were persecuted, how they faced up to and dealt with the persecution. They should relate this to what they have studied on the teaching of Mark on how Christians should behave under persecution and the example of Jesus.

Candidates should discuss **differing views on whether Christians should expect to be persecuted** and should be ready to follow the example of Jesus in undergoing persecution.